

TEACHING AND TESTING

Adventure Day : Taking language outside the classroom

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Taking the Spanish language outside of the classroom has always been a goal for me. A lot of other subjects have field trips and activities that make the subject that little bit more interesting. Languages, on the other hand, are expected to either take an overseas trip or stay inside the classroom.

This year, the Spanish Department at King's College had a special meeting to brainstorm ways in which we could deal with this 'issue'. We were trying to lift the profile of the language in the school, to make the subject more attractive to our students, to take it outside of the classroom and basically, to make it more fun for everyone. The net outcome of that meeting was the Adventure Day.



King's College Spanish students take part
in the Adventure Day

This experience followed the Directions for Learning as set out in the New Zealand Curriculum. We were creating situations to make our students confident, connected and actively involved. We were encouraging them to attain the values as per the curriculum guide: innovation, inquiry, curiosity, community and participation, integrity and respect. All the key competencies were reflected in this race. They had to think, use language and symbols and text. They had to manage themselves, relate to others, participate and contribute.

The learning outcomes were complemented by engaging students in activities which required leadership skills, giving peer direction, communication and feedback and a multitude of other learning outcomes, but the central theme still revolved around taking Spanish out of the classroom and having fun.

We borrowed the concept from 'adventure racing'; a sport that has been growing rapidly in New Zealand over recent years. In essence, it is a race in which teams have a set amount of time to do a number of activities in a particular area. The teams must be together at all times. In our Adventure Day, the activities are spread around the school grounds and students have to choose which they want to do, in the given time period to obtain the greatest number of points in order to win.

We have only undertaken running the Spanish Adventure Day twice so far so we are still learning about it and improving it little by little. However, written below are a few pointers that I think everyone will benefit from.

When to do it

The ideal time to do this kind of activity is either during the last period of the day or right before lunch so you can have a prize giving during lunchtime. At the end of term it is also a great way to finish off, before the holidays, or perhaps it could be incorporated as an afternoon's activity in International Languages' week.

Who to do it with

Initially we trialled it with only one class (the Year 9's). After this we had a staff debrief and decided on things which we had to change, improve or get rid of. Our next mission was during International Languages' week when we had all classes (Year 9's to Year 13's), 150 students involved in a mass Race which was awesome to watch and be a part of.

What kind of activities to make

You can do anything that is fun and you already do in class.

- a) Cultural questions that they either know the answer to or are able to research at the library (Internet and through books).
- b) Songs – in which they have to fill in the gaps, dance etc.
- c) Maps with directions they have to follow. Points are given if they arrive at the right place.
- d) Worksheets (though they need to be fun).
- e) Internet activities.
- f) Word finds (how many words can they find in a set period of time or they can allocate as much time as they want).
- g) Crosswords.
- h) Mathematical questions (answers and questions in Spanish).
- i) Put the photos in order.
- j) YouTube. Choose a short passage and set questions about it.
- k) Take photos of different things or places around the school.

When you create each activity you should have the following:

1. The resources for the activity.

2. Students instructions that will be given to each team as they come in to the activity.
3. Teacher instructions. These will also need to have a copy of the student instructions.
The teacher /student in charge of the activity will a mark scheme for the activity plus all relevant information.

Before the event

- 1) Let the school know what you are doing. As you are going to have your students outside the classroom it will be the polite thing to do. If you are taking students out of other classes for an afternoon, then you will need to ask permission to do it.
- 2) Choose the activities you are going to do and where around the school you are going to place them. When you do this, keep in mind that it can always rain (especially in Auckland). Classrooms, the Hall, Library, etc won't be a problem but outside should be covered.
- 3) Each activity needs to have one person in charge. This person could be a teacher or a senior student. We had some colleagues helping us but we also gave the responsibility of one activity to each one of the Year 13 students.
- 4) This is a team sport so the first thing to do is organize the teams. We decided to put five people per team, but this may vary depending on your class sizes. If the group is small (only one class), then you can let them organize their own groups. If you are going to have a big group, then you will be better off arranging the groups yourself and publishing this on the day.
- 5) Create a booklet where all points can be recorded as they do each activity. An example of this can be downloaded from the STANZA (Spanish Teacher Association of NZ Aotearoa) website <http://stanza.wordpress.com>
- 6) The day before the race, explain the rules to the students so they know exactly what is expected. A copy of the rules should also go into the booklet so they can double check in case of any doubt. An example of the rules could be as follows:

INSTRUCTIONS	
Rule 1	Your complete team will have to be at the Hall (starting place) at 1.45 pm.
Rule 2	You will have until 2.00 pm to make a plan of what activities you are going to do to get as many points as you can.
Rule 3	The race will start at 2.00 pm.
Rule 4	You will have to be back at the hall by 3.10 pm. Any minute after that time will be penalised with a 10 point deduction.
Rule 5	Your team MUST be together at all times. No instructions or points will be given unless the whole team is present.
Rule 6	You will not be allowed to start any activity until the whole team is present.
Rule 7	Make sure you have the booklet with you at all times. No booklet, no points awarded.

7) Finally, see if you can find a student who can take photos of the teams while they are doing the race and associated activities. It is a nice record for the department and it can be used to promote the language on open day or in parent-teachers interviews.

The day of the event

Put posters publishing which students are in each team. These should be around the place where you meet, normally at the hall if you have all the classes participating, or the classroom if it is one class. Set up a place in which each team will get together. Give a number to each team (or a name) and place a poster with the different team numbers so the group can get together at the pre-set venue.

Starting of the event

Teams will go and place themselves by the poster where their team number is at the pre-set time.

Once the whole team is there, hand out the booklets and the map where the students can see where all activities around the school are placed. If there is no map, they will need a list of the activities and where they can find each one of them. In this information paper you should also specify how many points each activity is worth.

The information sheet should look something like this:

ACT	TITLE	POINTS	PLACE	TIME	TiC / SiC
Act 1	Take photos	200	All over the school. Check at the hall for pts.		
Act 2	Put the words in order	25	Board room	5 min.	
Act 3	Internet search Olympics	30	Library	5 min	
Act 4	Youtube questions	35	Room 10	8 min.	
Act 5	Follow the directions in the map	25	Room 34. Pre-fab classroom	5 min	
Act 6	Conjugation of verbs	36	Lecture Theatre	6 min	

Act 7	Mathematical questions	50	PE classroom	5 min.	
Act 8	Language Perfect	30	Computer room. Room 22	6 min	
	TOTAL	431			

Give them between five and ten minutes to make their own plan. Have a stopwatch ready to make sure that you have the correct amount of time. Let the students know they should do the same. Start the race at the same time.

Finishing the event

Make sure you have a few teachers/students in charge, coming back to the finishing point so they can write the time at which each team has arrived in the booklet as they hand it in. Then have a couple of those people (either students or teachers) adding up the marks so the prize giving can take place quickly.

Make sure that you have some prizes for them. Normally a chocolate bar is enough to keep them happy. Go from last to first to keep the intrigue. If there are too many teams then do the top five in the same manner.

After the event

Ask the students what did they enjoy the most and the least? The best ideas I have had came from students and they always make really valid points. Ask them how they would do it better next time?

With the photos taken by the student in charge of 'Media Release' that you organized before the event, publish the Adventure Race in the school newsletter or in the end of year school magazine. If you have an intranet or website the students can access, put the photos and the results there (remember to ask for written permission from the students who have been photographed).

To set this up for the first time it seems to be quite a lot of work, but the advantage is that once you have done it, you can use it year after year. The instructions, booklets etc can be reused and the activities will need very small alterations, if any. Students love it because is fun, different and it gets them out of the classroom.

Give it a go, and you will see how exciting the language can be!

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